

Chapter NR 1

NATURAL RESOURCES BOARD POLICIES

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NR 1.01 The management of fisheries and aquatic resources. Preamble.

(1) To meet its responsibilities established by statute, department programs shall be based on scientific management principles which emphasize the protection, perpetuation, development, and use of all desirable aquatic species.

(2) The goal of fish management is to provide opportunities for the optimum use and enjoyment of Wisconsin's aquatic resources, both sport and commercial. A healthy and diverse environment is essential to meet this goal and shall be promoted through management programs.

(3) Aquatic resources include both nongame and game species of fish, other aquatic animals and their habitats. Endangered and threatened species form a special group that will be managed according to ch. NR 27 and s. 29.415, Stats.

(4) To assure its effectiveness, the management program shall be based upon a close working relationship among all functions of the department, other governmental agencies, federally recognized Indian tribes, and the public. The department will keep interested parties informed of policies, plans and management. To anticipate change and meet future demand,

the department shall engage in long-range planning of management programs.

(5) Financing the department's fish and aquatic resource management program through, in large part, user fees, particularly license fees and excise taxes on selected equipment purchased by sport and commercial fishers, is an established principle. Although user fees collected for a specific purpose are targeted at that purpose, they provide significant indirect benefits for a wide range of wildlife and users. When beneficiaries are a broader or different segment of the public, other funding sources will be sought.

(6) Wisconsin law enunciates a trust doctrine which secures the right of all Wisconsin citizens to quality, non-polluted waters and holds that waters are the common property of all citizens. Fish management programs will vigorously uphold the doctrine that citizens have a right to use in common the waters of the state and these waters shall be maintained free of pollution.

(7) With access to Wisconsin's lakes and streams a prerequisite for their use by the public, the acquisition and development of public access to waters should be accelerated, particularly in the more populous areas of the state.

(8) Wild and wilderness lakes and streams are a special and limited resource providing unique settings for enjoyment of fishing and other outdoor activities. Additional efforts are required to designate lakes and streams for this status. Special management methods that increase fishing quality shall be encouraged on these waters. Such methods may include trophy fishing, regulated harvest, special seasons, and controlled entry.

(9) Sport fishing should remain a true amateur sport which combines the pleasures and skills of angling with wildlife and scenic enjoyment, contemplation, and other subtle pleasures, not competition. Recent trends toward commercialization of sport fishing through contests and tournaments will be closely monitored. Appropriate action within the existing authority will be taken to control excesses.

History: Cr. Register, March, 1976, No. 243, eff. 4-1-76; r. and recr. Register, February, 1980, No. 290, eff. 3-1-80.

NR 1.015 The management of wildlife, preamble. (1) The conservation act (s. 23.09 (1), Stats.) requires the department of natural resources to provide an adequate and flexible system for the protection, development and use of forests, fish and game, lakes, streams, plant life, flowers and other outdoor resources in this state. Specific authorities and missions of the department for wildlife protection and use besides the general authority are:

(a) Protect and manage nongame species, particularly endangered, threatened and uncommon species;

(b) Acquire and lease lands;

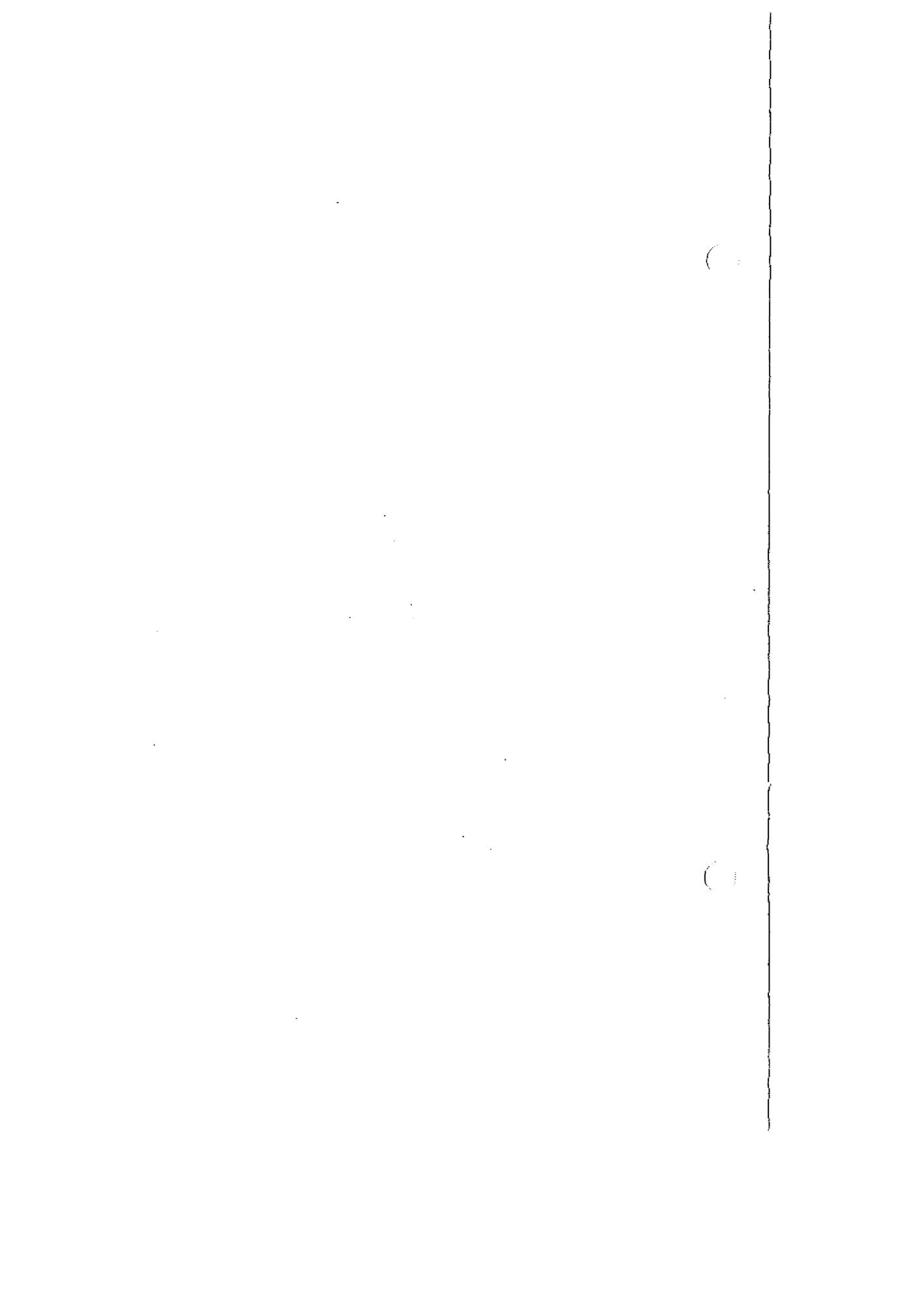
(c) Conduct research and surveys;

(d) Establish long-range resource management plans and priorities;

(e) Manage wildlife habitat on public land;

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(f) Provide regulations to govern the harvest of game species and fur-bearing mammals;



tion of allowable harvest among various users and the establishment of restricted areas.

History: Cr. Register, February, 1980, No. 290, eff. 3-1-80.

NR 1.11 Wildlife management. The natural resources board:

(1) Endorses the concept and principles of professional wildlife management, considers scientific findings to be the primary foundation of sound wildlife management programs, and supports research and surveys necessary to provide the technical information required for effective implementation of this policy.

(2) Recognizes that effective policy implementation requires the input and support of an informed public; endorses an active program to inform people of wildlife resource issues and alternative solutions; and will make every reasonable effort to obtain broad public input during its decision-making process.

(3) Recognizes the need to strengthen the educational efforts of the department relating to hunter competence, standards of ethical hunting behavior and respect for landowners rights; educational efforts must also be directed toward nonhunters to improve their knowledge and understanding of wildlife as a renewable natural resource and of hunting as both a method of controlling wildlife populations and as a form of outdoor recreation.

(4) Endorses the concept of comprehensive wildlife planning whereby actual and potential contributions of all functions of the department toward achievement of common wildlife management goals and objectives are recognized and, where feasible, integrated into operational activities.

(5) Recognizes that regulation of certain human activities is an integral and necessary part of wildlife management; that a sound legal system which combines equitable laws and judicious law enforcement is essential; and that wildlife law enforcement programs which are commensurate with other management efforts and contribute toward the achievement of common goals and objectives are necessary.

(6) Endorses the development and adoption of stronger regulatory measures, including more stringent license requirements, to assure an acceptable, minimum standard of hunting performance.

(7) Supports the maintenance of ecological diversity and health, and will do everything in its power to protect and maintain free-living populations of all species of wildlife currently existing in Wisconsin; extirpated species will be reintroduced whenever feasible ecologically, economically and socially.

(8) Supports the management of game species and habitat with the objective of increasing or maintaining populations to provide hunting opportunities.

(9) Supports the regulated use of wildlife for human benefits, including hunting and trapping where legal harvests do not reduce subsequent population levels of these renewable wildlife resources or where population reduction of certain species is a deliberate objective.

(10) Supports efforts to foster and promote the voluntary conservation of wildlife habitat on private lands and also supports the development and maintenance of cooperative programs for wildlife management and hunting recreation with landowners and operators of private lands.

(11) Recognizes that private use of Wisconsin's protected wildlife is appropriate provided that use for educational, recreational, scientific or economic purposes does not deleteriously affect native or migratory wildlife and identifies the necessity of establishing and administering licensing or permit systems to insure proper care and handling of protected wildlife when persons are entrusted with their care or use.

(12) Strongly encourages the use of well trained hunting dogs in the pursuit and retrieval of game; that extensive training and field trial competition provide hunting dogs which are proficient at finding and retrieving more game; and that the department will actively participate in programs which assist and encourage the training of hunting dogs including the designation and management of specific state controlled lands for trials and training provided this use does not conflict with the primary purpose of the property.

History: Cr. Register, April, 1975, No. 232, eff. 5-1-75; r. and recr. Register, July, 1977, No. 259, eff. 8-1-77; cr. (11), Register, October, 1982, No. 322, eff. 11-1-82; cr. (12), Register, April, 1985, No. 352, eff. 5-1-85.

NR 1.12 Migratory game birds. Migratory game birds are those species listed in s. 29.01 (3) (d), Stats., which in the course of their seasonal movements will almost always leave the land or water on which they fledged and will often cross state or international boundaries. These species are regulated under federal law and international treaties. To implement an adequate program for migratory game birds, the following needs and actions are essential:

(1) HABITAT MANAGEMENT. Wetlands are the primary habitat component for most migratory game bird species. Upland nesting cover and woodlands are also necessary for certain species. Legislation and programs that will protect and enhance migratory game bird habitat must be strengthened. Such a program has to include:

(a) Acquisition in fee title to protect critical lands and waters and to permit developments necessary for enhancement;

(b) Easement acquisition to protect other important lands and waters from excessive degradation by human activities;

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(1) **HABITAT MANAGEMENT.** The natural growth and changing composition of forest stands, particularly in the north, is causing a long-term decline in habitat quality for big game and other forest wildlife.

(a) *Forest diversity.* A planned program of maintaining forest diversity including shade-intolerant cover types, particularly aspen, oak and forest openings, is required to slow or halt this decline in habitat quality and to maintain deer populations at established goal levels.

(b) *Summer range.* Habitat conditions are deteriorating most rapidly on summer deer range. Forest maturation, conversion from sun-loving tree species to shade tolerant species and loss of grassy openings are reducing the quality of summer deer range and with it, the deer carrying capacity in northern Wisconsin. The management objective, depending upon the deer population goal, is to provide an adequate mixture of aspen, oak, upland brush, jack pine and sodded openings in connection with regular forest management practices.

(c) *Winter range.* Winter habitat may be increasing as a result of expanding coniferous cover and implementation of deer yard plans on public lands. However, winter deer survival is largely dependent on fat acquired on the summer range. Deer have evolved physiologically and behaviorally to survive in northern forest habitats under average winter conditions. Occasional severe winters will result in deer mortality. These periodic losses are considered normal for northern deer and will occur irrespective of winter habitat quality. Severe deer losses can be mitigated most effectively by maintaining quality summer habitat. Direct feeding of hay, corn or other agricultural crops is seldom effective and even detrimental if not introduced gradually over time. While browse cutting does provide natural feed, it is largely ineffective. Specially formulated feed in pelletized form has been demonstrated to benefit malnourished deer. However, the cost and logistics of feeding enough deer to produce a measurable result in subsequent years precludes feeding as normal public policy. The department recognizes public concern for malnourished deer, public desire to feed stressed deer regardless of cost or measurable results and the benefits to individual animals which are properly fed. Therefore, the following policy is adopted for wintering deer in the northern forest.

1. The department will seek appropriate deer harvest quotas to maintain deer populations at established goals.

2. Habitat management will emphasize maintaining summer range quality which will produce well nourished deer in the fall and enhance their overwinter survival.

3. The department will monitor wintering deer herds by surveying yarding areas and measuring winter severity.

4. The department will implement existing deer yard plans to maximize browse and perpetuate priority cover.

5. The department will provide technical advice and guidance to individuals and groups on where, when, what and how to feed privately acquired food to deer during severe winters.

(2) **HARVEST.** Big game hunting regulations shall be designed to meet the following objectives:

(a) *Population goals.* Maintaining a deer herd in balance with its range and at population goals reasonably compatible with agricultural and forest management objectives in each deer management unit. Deer management units are areas of similar habitat bounded by major roads. Population goals in the forested deer range are to be based on long-term average carrying capacity as determined by unit population responses to habitat quality and past winters of varying severity. Goals in the agricultural range are to be based upon hunter demand balanced with an assessment of local human tolerance to deer numbers, particularly as it relates to crop damage and the frequency of deer-vehicle collisions on highways. Annual hunting seasons will harvest deer to maintain goal levels and will include buck, either-sex or buck and party quota permit bag limits as the need dictates.

(b) *Hunting objectives.* Achieving and maintaining opportunities for a range of deer hunting experience while still allowing to the extent possible, freedom of choice by hunters. Regulations should provide incentives or disincentives to encourage better distribution of hunting pressure. If hunter numbers continue to increase, control of hunting pressure may become necessary.

(c) Maintaining the black bear as a trophy big game animal and offering the best opportunity for a quality hunting experience. In addition, the maintenance of a quality hunt will be emphasized by continuing controls over the use of bait and dogs.

(d) Deer and bear damage complaints will be handled according to the provisions of s. 29.598, Stats., and rules as published in the Wisconsin administrative code. Damage can be most economically controlled by maintaining populations with a hunting season harvest as specified in par. (a).

(3) **RESEARCH AND SURVEYS.** Surveys, investigations and research shall be conducted to provide technical information necessary to establish population estimates, harvest recommendations, population goals and habitat management needs and guidelines.

History: Cr. Register, April, 1975, No. 232, eff. 5-1-75; r. and recr. Register, July, 1977, No. 259, eff. 8-1-77; am. (2) (d), Register, January, 1984, No. 337, eff. 2-1-84; am. (1) (a), (2) (a) and (b), r. and recr. (1) (b) and (c), Register, July, 1987, No. 379, eff. 8-1-87.

NR 1.16 Furbearers. For the purposes of this section, furbearers are muskrat, mink, weasel, beaver, otter, skunk, raccoon, fox, coyote, bobcat and opossum. The furbearer management program has the following essential needs and actions:

(1) **HABITAT MANAGEMENT.** (a) Wetlands are the primary habitat component for many furbearers so the actions regarding wetland protection and management stated in NR 1.12(1) are reemphasized in relation to furbearers.

(b) The capacity to produce furbearers on lands and waters under the management and control of the department can be increased through more intensive management of suitable habitat. Generally, management activities designed to improve furbearer populations are compatible with management for other species of wildlife. In certain situations populations of furbearers such as fox, raccoon, coyotes and skunks can depress the population of other game species. Management activities on department lands should be designed to achieve a desirable balance between

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predator and prey species which is consistent with goals and objectives established in the course of developing master plans for state properties.

(c) Since the majority of furbearers depend upon habitat under the control of private landowners, management information will be provided to private landowners requesting it. Incentive programs to encourage habitat preservation and management on private lands will be developed where they are feasible.

(2) **HARVEST.** Furbearers are significant from a biological, recreational and economic standpoint. Regulations will be designed to make optimum use of these species for these purposes.

(a) Every effort shall be made to design regulations on as uniform a basis as possible that will still maintain desirable population levels from year to year. High pelt prices on these species can result in temporarily depressed, local populations. Both recreational and biological objectives shall be accorded primary consideration in the establishment of harvest regulations.

(b) Because of the recreational and economic value of the furbearer harvest present trapping methods and techniques must continue. However, efforts to develop new trapping methods and techniques will be encouraged.

(3) **STOCKING.** Stocking of furbearers is restricted to the trapping and relocation of certain species to effect planned range extension or introductions.